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ABSTRACT

This paper discusses the development of research on early childhood education in New Zealand, the people involved in the research, and other general issues concerning early childhood education in New Zealand. Content analysis of the New Zealand Early Childhood Care and Education Bibliography reveals an increase in published materials concerning early childhood education in New Zealand in the last decade. However, while most of the research projects have relevance to "regular" staff and parents, little has been done on the effects of preschool education on children. There are two reasons for this: (1) early childhood education has not been politicized in New Zealand as it has been in the United State (compensatory programs), and (2) there have been no large sums of money available to carry out expensive evaluation of early childhood education programs. Two main groups of early childhood researchers are cited most frequently in the 1965-78 New Zealand Early Childhood Care and Education Bibliography. These are university professors and lecturers, and research officers (researchers). Eighty-two percent of the authors in the bibliography have written only one or two articles. Also cited are articles by practitioners--preschool advisers, teachers and speech therapists. (Author/MP)

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Research on Early Childhood Education in New Zealand

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My task in preparing this paper was made easier by my decision in 1978 to compile a bibliography of New Zealand early childhood research between 1965 and 1978 in order that I might carry out the consultancy aspect of my work for NZCER effectively. With the groundwork done by Geraldine McDonald's bibliography (1975) and a supplementary list compiled by the then *set* editor, Keith Pickens (1978), I searched libraries and circularised universities and teachers colleges for additions. The result was a 441 item Bibliography (with annotations) published this year (Meade, 1979). There has been a large increment in material during 1979 with 43 papers coming from one source alone - the Second Early Childhood Care and Development Convention.

When I was gathering material together in preparation for writing this paper, I did some content analysis of the *New Zealand Early Childhood Care and Education Bibliography* but I decided to go beyond straight facts and figures and do a little investigation to provide descriptions of issues and the people in early childhood research as well.

Facts and Figures

The items in the Bibliography are grouped under 15 headings. The subject headings are those used by the American Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC), and each item is listed only once. Table 1 provides an analysis of the 441 items. It shows how many items are in each section as well as the number and proportion of items within each section which have been published or which are theses. The remaining items in each section are generally conference papers or unpublished research reports.

A paper presented at *Research in Education in New Zealand: A Balance Sheet*, First National Conference of the New Zealand Association for Research in Education (NZARE), Victoria University of Wellington, 7-10 December 1979.

Table 1: Analysis of *New Zealand Bibliography of Early Childhood Care and Education* Items

Sections	Item Total	Published	%	Completed Theses	%
Child Development	78	36	*(46)*	23	*(29)*
Child Language	28	12	*(43)*	9	*(32)*
Early Childhood Education	85	43	*(51)*	15	*(18)*
Ethnic Studies	27	19	*(70)*	5	*(19)*
Family Life	25	20	*(80)*	-	
Handicapped Children	52	33	*(63)*	6	*(12)*
Infant Behaviour	16	5 (+ 2 videos)	*(31)*	4	*(25)*
Media Research	10	5	*(50)*	1	*(10)*
Parent Education	13	8	*(62)*	2	*(15)*
Parent Participation	5	3	*(60)*	-	
Parents	15	8	*(53)*	1	*(7)*
Pre-School Teachers	17	11	*(65)*	4	*(24)*
Programmes	30	18	*(60)*	4	*(13)*
Research	30	16	*(53)*	-	
Training	10	5	*(50)*	2	*(20)*
Total	441	242	*(55)*	76	*(17)*

Early childhood education (a 'catch-all' category mostly concerned with descriptions and analyses of early childhood institutions) and child development are the areas which are, by far, the most frequently studied or written about.

It can be seen that child development (23) and early childhood education (15) are also the most popular areas of study for theses. However, the area of study which attracted the greatest proportion of thesis students was child

language - 32 per cent of these items were thesis studies. Family life and parent participation are the areas which seem not to attract thesis students. In addition to the 76 completed theses, 5 lecturers reported theses in progress. Of these 81 theses : 8 were for a PhD; 48 were in education; 24 were for a diploma (Dip. Ed. or Dip. Ed. Psych.); 2 were in psychology; 1 was in English; and 1 in social science.

Fifty-five per cent of the items had been published. Material about family life, or about Maori and Pacific Islanders and early childhood education (termed ethnic studies), had the best record for being published, whereas infant behaviour studies had the smallest proportion of studies published. However, infant behaviour researchers have used another form of dissemination, namely videotape, on two occasions.

A comparison of these statistics with some pertaining to Geraldine McDonald's 1975 bibliography reveals that in the mid-1970s early childhood education papers were the most prevalent with 14 items fitting into this category. However, there was a far higher percentage of papers being written about Maori and Pacific Islanders' involvement in early childhood education - there were 10 such papers or books in the earlier bibliography (17 per cent) which equalled the items about child development. The proportion dropped to 6 per cent in the 1979 bibliography with 14 authors contributing 27 items. Considering the amount of discussion on multi-cultural issues amongst educationists, there is a paucity of ethnic studies in the 1970s - it would seem that most of the discussants are only paying lip-service to understanding the issues. None of the 1975 items could be categorised as parent participation nor as papers about research.

The number of theses studies has grown dramatically. The previous bibliography listed 27; my 1979 Bibliography includes 81. Nineteen per cent of the theses in the 1975 Bibliography were supervised by university departments of education, and this proportion rose to 77 per cent in the 1979 Bibliography. I may have been more conscientious about seeking out theses, but I believe there has also been a rapid growth in thesis studies.

In the 1975 Bibliography 24 (40 per cent) of the items had been published. Fifty-five per cent of the items in the 1979 Bibliography had been published. More importantly, however, more of them are to be found in widely-available books and journals, and researchers are learning to use other media, such as video, to disseminate findings. This was boosted by two sets of conference papers - those from the

First Early Childhood Care and Development Convention (*Early Childhood in New Zealand*, O'Rourke and Clough, 1978) and the Invitational Conference on Early Childhood Research in New Zealand (*Young Children and Early Childhood Services: Some New Zealand Research*, Gatenwald and Stanley, 1979) - being published in 1979. The 1979 Second Early Childhood Care and Development Convention Papers (*Early Childhood in New Zealand: Their Needs Our Concern*, Neale and Renwick, 1979) were readily available - they were printed and out by the last day of the convention. Earlier published material was often available to researchers too - it was only found in journals issued by the early childhood organisations.

[illegible] New Zealand

I was curious to know whether the topics being researched arose out of the pragmatic concerns felt by New Zealand early childhood workers and administrators, so I had a quick look through the records of the early 1970s of the three main organisations - playcentres, kindergartens and child care centres. I intend now to give an overview of the issues affecting the Playcentre Federation, the Free Kindergarten Union, the Kindergarten Teachers Association and the Association of Child Care Centres; then comment on any relationships (or lack thereof) between the issues and research in early childhood.

The New Zealand Playcentre Federation was concerned about many issues. Its only case to Government was for funds for training officers' expenses. Other self-mentioned concerns were: the public's view of pre-school education generally and playcentre education particularly; the effects of the changing role of women on voluntary organisations; maintaining parent involvement and education; the allocation and effects of government funds; and matching provision of service with needs.

In the New Zealand Free Kindergarten Union records of the early 1970s, I found repeated reference to expansion in the number of kindergarten places, provision of training, and the need for supervising head teachers. They seldom questioned the effects of what they did or wanted for the future. Their concerns were at a very empirical level, although they began asking to research needs for evaluations of extra groups attached to kindergartens.

Salaries and training caused to dominate the New Zealand Free Kindergarten Teachers Association meetings in the early 1970s. The KTTA has also been concerned about the effects of extra groups of children attending some kindergartens - groups of handicapped children and second groups of children attending on two

afternoons. They have been pursuing related issues in the late 1970s - group size, and adult : child ratios.

Some of the New Zealand Association for Child Care Centres' issues were common to all early childhood organisations and some were unique. They were concerned about the public's view of child care, their shaky financial position and the effects of Government funding, and training; as were the other organisations in varying ways. Their own unique issues were out-of-date Regulations and the inequitable provision of child care with very inadequate facilities for after-school and holiday care.

Did any researchers address themselves to these issues? The answer appears to be 'only sometimes', although papers have been written on them without relying on research findings. Generally speaking, they are not issues that can be turned into research topics; for example, the practical question of 'How can we get more money?' is not researchable. And researchable issues seldom became research projects; for example, to my knowledge my PhD research is the only systematic study of the effects of funding decisions on pre-school organisational functioning.

The same study investigated parent views of early childhood services. There have been many other studies which incorporate different people's viewpoints of various service as a component. Another commonly tackled issue is research into the matching of provision of service to need. David Barney undertook the largest project; a nationwide study reported in *Who Gets to Pre-school?* (Barney, [illegible]5). In addition, Maris O'Rourke, Penny Jamieson and myself have each investigated and written about meeting the needs of young families. However, no-one has done an availability study of child care. I suspect it would show up inequities in provision, as was found in other services. With increased diversification of services being sought, people are suggesting that community surveys will be necessary; but the only ones done by researchers to date are those organised by the Department of Social Work at Victoria University, and two by the Society for Research on Women. The Town and Country Planning Division of the Ministry of Works and Development is currently preparing a kitset of guidelines for community surveys.

The provision of training has engendered some research. Joan Brockett did a pilot study towards evaluating kindergarten training; and a training-related research project on the aims and tasks of kindergarten teachers was completed this year by June Kean from the North Shore Teachers College. Estelle von Sturmer has, in 1979, taken up a position involving some research into child care training.

Geraldine McDonald has written a good deal about the changing role of women and the implications for early childhood services, although she has relied on research results for only a fraction of the papers. She has also, in conjunction with the Playcentre Federation, conducted a project on parent helping in playcentres which looks at the involvement and education of parent helpers.

In the mid-1970s the Kindergarten Union joined with the NZFKTA in asking for an evaluation of the extra groups attached to kindergartens - groups of handicapped children, and extra groups of children attending some afternoons in kindergartens with long waiting lists. The Department of Education did undertake an 'in-house' evaluation of the extra afternoon groups but the findings never became public information. The NZFKTA has now also become concerned with group size and ratios. Some data on group size and on ratios will be generated by my investigation of adult-child interactions in six early childhood programmes in early 1980.

To sum up, it could be said that research into the issues concerning the leaders of the three early childhood movements is patchy and often takes place several years after the issue raises its head. Of the researchable issues which have not been investigated, some have been written about as 'thought pieces', but others have never been picked up and studied in any way.

However, there has been research on matters of day to day importance to workers and parents which has struck a chord. The topics have not been burning issues for national administrators. Research such as the Going to School project, the Maori Family Education Association pre-schools study and the Parent Helpers project all done by New Zealand Council for Educational Research staff have reflected the concerns of the folk at the 'chalk face'. Michael Parsons, Peter Hallinan, Liz Straton and David Mitchell's studies on handicapped children have similarly been very sensitive to issues for families with handicapped children. Practical concerns have been researched, but often written up too much in the academic mode to be readily useful for staff and parents.

Issues: Overseas

What are the issues of current concern to early childhood researchers overseas? Are we concerned with similar matters in New Zealand? Administrators and politicians in the United States and in Britain have been most concerned with provision of early childhood services for disadvantaged children. Because enormous amounts of money were poured into providing pre-school programmes in the 1960s, there was also money available for expensive evaluations of the effects of pre-school education; for example, for Headstart evaluations. In New Zealand we have few studies concerned with effects. The exceptions are Anne Smith's studies on the effects of day care on children's dependency behaviour and Jane Ritchie's study of the effects of the Bereiter and Engelmann programme on children attending the Te Kohanga experimental pre-school. On the whole, decision-makers, staff and parents in New Zealand are amazingly accepting of the reputed benefits of pre-school education. There has been no pressure for researchers to produce 'proof' of the positive effects or to check whether there are any detrimental consequences.

When I had preliminary discussions with educators in the three main movements about the direction I should take in a research project on early childhood programmes, none of them could specify effects on the children in which they were strongly interested. They are fostering processes, not achievement scores. The playcentre people were more interested in my investigating effects on family behaviours. Barry Burdon attempted such a study and found no significant shift in attitudes resulting from playcentre experience.

Why do we not show interest in the effects of pre-school education on children? I believe there are two reasons. First, early childhood education has not been politicized here in the same way as it was in the United States with the compensatory programmes. And relatedly second, there have been no large sums of money available to carry out expensive evaluations.

Apart from our lack of evaluative research, do we share research interests in common with research colleagues overseas? The Organization for European Co-operation and Development has been concerned with

integration and co-ordination of services and the transition into school. This international organisation affected the research being done for the NZ/OECD Conference on Early Childhood Care and Education, 1978, and a cluster of projects examined co-ordination of services. Margery Renwick had already collected her data on the going to school process, so New Zealand was in front of other countries with research into the transition into school.

The National Foundation for Educational Research in Britain in the mid-1970s has been most concerned with disadvantaged children, reading and books, parent helping, interaction in the classroom, and record keeping and assessment of pre-school education. In New Zealand, studies have been done or are in process on all the topics except the questions of record keeping and assessment.

American researchers show a wide range of interest in child development issues but the sociological studies have been concerned with the effects of 'fractured' families, sex role learning, and parenthood training. Researchers in New Zealand have tackled the latter questions and we have two of them in our midst at this symposium. Elizabeth Connelly has been interested in sex role learning for several years now and Bruce McMillan is writing up a PhD study on parenthood training.

It would seem therefore that we do research on similar topics to overseas early childhood researchers except in the important area of summative evaluations of pre-school programmes.

People in Early Childhood Research in New Zealand

I have been name-dropping during the earlier part of this paper, but I would like to turn now to a more systematic description of the people who appear most frequently in the *New Zealand Early Childhood Care and Education Bibliography: 1965-78.*

It was no surprise to find which occupational group was the typical group of early childhood researchers: university lecturers. Part of their job is to carry out research and they get the results into print. The American 'publish or be damned' ethos has an influence in New Zealand. The other main group comprise paid research officers. Table 2 sets out a list of authors who have 5 or more items in the Bibliography and their occupation.

Table 2: Authors Who Appear Frequently in the *New Zealand Early Childhood Care and Education Bibliography*

Author	Occupation	No. of Items
David Barney	Professor of Education, Auckland University	15
Barbara Calvert	Professor of Education, Otago University	5
Marie Clay	Professor of Education, Auckland University	12
Penny Jamieson	Research Officer, NZCER	5
Philip Lawrence	Professor of Education, Canterbury University	12
Don McAlpine	Lecturer in Education, Massey University	8
Geraldine McDonald	Assistant Director, NZCER	27
Bruce McMillan	Lecturer in Education, Otago University	5
Anne Meade	Research Officer, NZCER	12
David Mitchell	Lecturer in Education, Waikato University	8
Maris O'Rourke	Lecturer in Early Childhood, Auckland Teachers College	8
Fay Panckhurst	NZCER, Wellington Teachers College, National Foundation for Educational Research	5
Michael Parsons	Lecturer, Education of the Deaf, Christchurch Teachers College	13
Margery Renwick	Research Officer, NZCER	5
Jane Ritchie	Lecturer in Psychology, Waikato University	11
Phil Silva	Executive Director, Dunedin Multi-disciplinary Child Development Study, Otago University	20
Anne Smith	Lecturer in Education, Otago University	6
Society for Research on Women in NZ	Volunteer researchers	6
Liz Straton	Developmental Psychologist, Department of Education	5
David Swain	Lecturer in Sociology, Waikato University	12
Keri Wilton	Lecturer in Education, Canterbury University	6

NB: Total number of authors = 21 (10 male and 10 female)

It was not possible to ascertain from the items, just how many papers were primary research reports. I think it would be fair to say that most of the authors in Table 2 have done only a few pieces of research. The only author whose number of items matches the number of research projects is the Society for Research on Women. The other authors generally have written a series of articles based on a lesser number of actual projects. I am not 'knocking' this process, because I believe in wide dissemination of research results. There are other researchers who disseminate their findings widely but do not write formal papers so often. They may not record all their talks they give for bibliographical purposes and yet they may have as much influence in the field as those who write a lot of formal papers.

The university staff include four professors of education and it is generally they who write for an international audience. However, other lecturers who have an interest in handicapped children tend also to have a reputation within New Zealand and beyond our shores. It is interesting to note that not all the lecturers are from Education Departments - Jane Ritchie is in a Psychology Department and David Swain in a Sociology Department.

Geraldine McDonald is the most prolific writer about early childhood topics, and I don't think this is just an artifact of my knowing all she has done whilst I may be unaware of other people's productivity. She writes and talks to groups frequently; and on a range of early childhood topics. Geraldine McDonald has a background of study, and lecturing at teachers colleges and university, and was the first appointee to the Early Childhood Unit at NZCER. It could be said that she has made the most of her research projects - of the 27 items she has in the Bibliography, only four are primary research reports. The remaining items are 'thought pieces', using the research findings as illustrative material, or critiques of other people's research.

Phil Silva is also a prolific writer with 20 items in the Bibliography, all of which relate to one longitudinal cohort study. He is the Executive Director of the Dunedin Multi-disciplinary Child Development Study. Phil Silva falls into an atypical group of early childhood researchers - his research has considerable support from medical funds.

There are a few other authors in the table above who do not fit in the norm of university lecturer or research officer and who deserve consideration. They are Maris O'Rourke, Michael Parsons, the Society for Research on Women and Liz Straton. Maris O'Rourke is part of the university system in that she is currently studying

for her PhD at the University of Kansas. However, only one item in the Bibliography stems from her thesis study. Her style of lecturing at teachers college includes setting an assignment each year asking students to research, say, participation in story reading groups in kindergartens. She goes beyond the normal assignment process and collates the results and writes them up. Michael Parsons is also a teachers college lecturer. His special field is education of the deaf with a particular interest in involving parents. Michael Parsons edits *The Journal for the Hearing Handicapped*, has won awards for a film *The Deaf Child in the Family* and has an international reputation for his work which probably generates more and more requests for articles. The Society for Research on Women is a voluntary organisation aiming to collect data on matters relating to women. All of their bigger projects are reported in a research monograph but they seldom write further secondary articles about their work. Liz Straton is a developmental psychologist who, mostly through her own initiative, has been working with very young handicapped children and their parents, and writing evaluative reports about the 'Dawnstart' scheme.

What about the other authors in the Bibliography? Who are they? Two hundred and twenty-seven authors are cited in this work, and about one-third of them are theses students. There are also articles by practitioners - pre-school advisers, teachers, speech therapists, play-centre personnel and so on - who have done a small piece of research and written one paper. Some lecturers in the field have only written one or two articles. It is revealing that 82 per cent (187) of the authors in the Bibliography have only written one or two articles, but generally each is a primary research report, albeit with fairly tentative findings if it is the author's first attempt at research.

It is commonly believed that the early childhood care and education field is a women's area. This is not borne out amongst early childhood researchers. Six of the authors were organisations (3 being women's groups). Of the remaining 221 authors, 103 were women and 118 men! The note to Table 2 indicated that equal numbers of both sexes were prolific writers.

Conclusion

Six points emerge from all these analyses of the *New Zealand Early Childhood Care and Education Bibliography* and comparisons with other data.

1. There has been an accelerating increase in material about early childhood care and education being written in New Zealand in the last decade. This increase continues with the recurrence of conventions on the topic.
2. More of the material is being published, and in more accessible publications.
3. Most of the authors have written only one or two articles.
4. When an author writes frequently, she or he is usually relating the material to only a few research projects.
5. Although major research projects have relevance to 'ordinary' staff and parents, only occasionally do they match issues facing the leaders of the main early childhood organisations.
6. Research workers in early childhood care and education are as likely to be women as men.

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Other works mentioned in the text will be found in Meade (1979) above.